

**Washington, DC** - The U.S. House of Representatives today voted overwhelmingly to require that any member of Congress convicted of corruption in office be forced to forfeit their Congressional pension. After voting for the measure, which passed the House by a vote of 431-0, 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) issued the following statement:

"Earlier this month, the House of Representatives passed some of the most sweeping changes to congressional ethics rules that this country has seen since Watergate. Today, I'm glad to say that we gave those new rules some additional teeth.

"It's outrageous to think that a member of Congress can be convicted of corruption, be sentenced to jail, and still receive a taxpayer funded pension benefit worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. What's worse is that it's taken Congress this long to address the problem."

According to the National Taxpayers Union, Congressman Duke Cunningham of California, who was recently convicted of accepting bribes from defense contractors, is eligible to receive a congressional pension estimated at \$36,000 a year for the rest of his life. Former Congressman Bob Ney of Ohio, who just last week was sentenced to 30 months in prison for his role in the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal, is also still eligible for his pension -- a roughly \$29,000 annual pension when he turns 62.

If signed by President Bush, the new pension forfeiture provision would apply to crimes like those committed by Cunningham and Ney. However, the "ex post facto" clause of the Constitution prohibits Congress from making any such sanctions retroactive. As a result, the forfeiture-of-pension penalty cannot be applied to Ney or Cunningham.

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